

Appendix table 7-2.

Level of public interest in selected policy issues: 1979–2001

(Mean index scores)

Issue	1979	1981	1983	1985	1988	1990	1992	1995	1997	1999	2001
New medical discoveries	—	—	—	83	85	83	82	83	83	82	80
Local schools	57	64	64	67	68	67	71	72	73	71	74
Environmental pollution	—	—	—	—	—	80	77	74	72	71	70
New scientific discoveries	61	60	68	66	66	63	61	67	70	67	69
Economy and business conditions	59	71	74	69	69	70	74	68	68	65	67
New inventions and technologies	59	58	65	64	64	64	64	66	69	65	66
Military and defense policy	—	—	64	68	70	73	68	60	59	64	60
International and foreign policy	49	59	54	59	58	68	62	48	47	53	53
Agriculture and farming	48	48	—	54	63	48	—	47	49	47	52
Space exploration	—	47	50	52	56	50	47	50	55	51	50
Sample size (number)	1,635	3,195	1,631	2,005	2,041	2,033	2,001	2,006	2,000	1,882	1,574

— = not asked

NOTES: Respondents were read the following statement: "There are a lot of issues in the news, and it is hard to keep up with every area. I'm going to read you a short list of issues, and for each one—as I read it—I would like you to tell me if you are very interested, moderately interested, or not at all interested." Responses were converted to a 0–100 scale by assigning a value of 100 for a "very interested" response, 50 for "moderately interested," and 0 for "not at all interested." Indices were obtained by adding all the values for each policy issue and computing the average.

SOURCES: National Science Foundation, Division of Science Resources Statistics (NSF/SRS), NSF Survey of Public Attitudes Toward and Understanding of Science and Technology, various years.

See figure 7-1 in Volume 1.

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